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ABSTRACT

In response to requests for information on transfer education in California, this report examines the number and rate of transfers from two- to four-year institutions, the ethnicity of transfer students, the academic performance of transfers, and questions remaining to be answered. After a summary of major study findings and background material, the report summarizes data related to the number of transfers; trends and changes in transfer activity over time; the potential for measuring the rate of transfer; differences among individual community colleges; the number, characteristics, and motives for "reverse" transfer; the underrepresentation of racial and ethnic minorities among transfer students; and the performance of transfer students at four-year colleges. Highlighted findings include: (1) in 1983-84, California community colleges transferred between 60,000 and 70,000 students to four-year institutions; (2) over the past 20 years, the number of transfer students has fluctuated due to factors such as changes in the numbers of high school graduates and college full-time enrollments, transfer admissions requirements of four-year schools, and student financial aid; (3) in fall 1983, 35,600 students transferred from community colleges to the University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) systems, while 38,400 UC and CSU students transferred to community colleges; and (4) minority students represented 39.3% of 1981 community college full-time enrollments, and only 27.9% of 1983 transfers. (HB)

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Item 1

Title: Information on Transfer Education

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Summary

In January, the Board of Governors selected transfer education as one of its priorities for work during 1984. Since that time, staff has prepared a plan for "improving the community college transfer function" and, at the May/June and July Board meetings, described progress on the elements of that plan and reviewed recent activities of the California Postsecondary Education Commission's ad hoc committee on community college transfer.

Chancellor's Office staff also began a review of the existing information on transfer education, working with University of California, California State University, CPEC, and community college personnel to identify the pertinent questions and assess the available data. This report is the result of that work.

Drawing from a variety of sources, staff finds that while information on transfer students is incomplete, it is possible to make a number of observations about the work of community colleges in this regard:

- o California community colleges transferred between 60,000 and 70,000 students to four-year institutions of postsecondary education in 1983-84.
- o Over the past two decades, the number of community college students transferring to UC and CSU has fluctuated because of changes in factors largely outside the colleges' control: numbers of high school graduates and college full-time enrollment, transfer admissions requirements of the four-year institutions, the military draft, students' preferences, and student financial aid.
- o "Rates" of transfer are not accurately measured at present. However, using younger full-time enrollment as a proxy for the potential pool of transfer students, community college transfer rates to UC and CSU have not changed appreciably in recent years.
- o Using first-time, full-time, less than 25 year-old enrollment as a proxy for the potential pool, community colleges transfer about three of every five potential transfer students within two years after their initial lower division enrollment.

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- o The number and rate of transfer by students from individual community colleges is related largely to the colleges' emphasis on baccalaureate courses, its location, and, for CSU transfers, the proportion of minority students enrolled at the college.
- o In the Fall 1983, 35,600 students transferred from community colleges to UC and CSU, while 38,400 students "transferred" from UC and CSU to community colleges. One of every five community college students previously attended a four-year college or university.
- o Minority transfer students, underrepresented (relative to community college enrollments) among transfers, increased in 1982 and 1983 because of demographic changes and, apparently, because of special efforts by certain colleges.
- o The performance of community college transfers at UC and CSU has been consistent over the past decade. Those who were originally four-year eligible out of high school do as well as those (natives) who enroll at UC or CSU as freshmen.
- o While fewer of those who were not originally four-year eligible persist in UC upper division, those who do persist receive grades nearly as high (close to 3.0 GPA) as those received by native and transfers who were originally eligible.
- o The average differential or drop in a transfer student's GPA from community college to UC is between -0.4 and -0.5 and to CSU is about -0.3.

Several gaps in our knowledge about community college transfer education appear to warrant further inquiry:

- o Have special efforts by certain community colleges, in fact, improved the rate of minority transfer? If so, should these efforts be undertaken by other colleges?
- o How do those who transfer under special admissions (outside the regular criteria) perform in upper division and what are their needs?
- o To what degree does the existence of impacted upper division majors at the four-year institutions present a barrier to community college transfer students? Is the job of obtaining financial aid more or less of an impediment than program entry?
- o How much do efforts to improve the identification of and assistance to potential community college transfer students improve the progress and performance of those students?
- o Are students satisfied with their preparation (in community college lower division) for transfer? Do they need to make up courses in order to enter their chosen major? Were their skills adequately developed; were they counseled properly?

Background

Information on transfer education was requested by the Board of Governors as part of the work on its 1984 Basic Agenda. From a review of the literature, Board discussions and other recent work, several major questions were identified and are addressed in this report:

- (1) How and why has the number and rate of community college transfers changed over time? Are there substantial differences among individual colleges? Have special efforts produced results? What are the numbers, characteristics, and motives of reverse transfer; i.e., those who transfer from four-year institutions to community colleges?
- (2) What is the extent of underrepresentation of minorities among transfer students? Is that changing? If so, how and why?
- (3) How do transfer students perform in upper division? How do their grades and rates of persistence compare to those students who enrolled at UC and CSU as freshmen? Are there major differences in the performance of those transfer students who were eligible to attend UC and CSU as freshmen as opposed to those who were not four-year eligible coming out of high school? Special admits vs. regular admits?

Staff's attempt to answer these questions is contained in a report which accompanies this agenda item. Major findings of this report are summarized below.

MAJOR FINDINGS

NUMBER AND RATE OF TRANSFERS

How many community college students transfer to four-year institutions?

For 1983-84, it is estimated that 51,000 community college students transferred to the University of California (UC) and the California State University (CSU). The Association of Independent Colleges reports that about 5,000 community college students transferred to 56 private four-year institutions in California. Other studies suggest the number transferring to the private institutions in California may be higher. The total number of transfers, including those going to out-of-state institutions, was likely between 60,000 and 70,000.

Even though the data are incomplete, it is evident that:

- o at least as many community college students transfer to in-state private institutions as transfer to UC
- o nine times more community college students transfer to CSU than transfer to UC.

From another perspective, it is estimated that

- o half of all those students transferring to in-state private institutions are from community colleges.

Further, CSU reports that

- o nearly half of CSU undergraduate students have had community college experience
- o the number of community college transfers exceeds those who enrolled at CSU directly from high school or from other institutions.

How and why has the number of community college transfers changed over time?

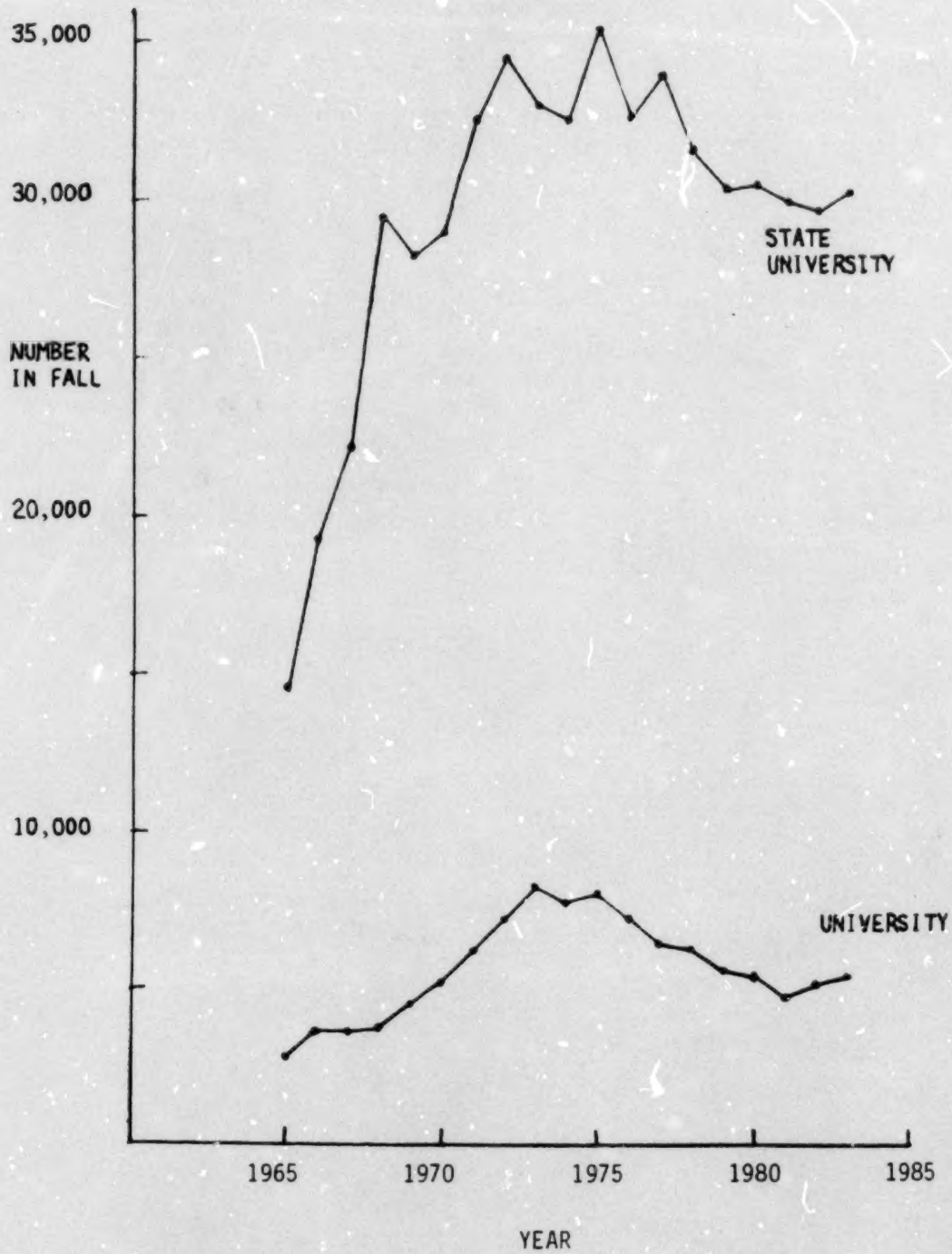
During the past two decades, the number of Fall transfers to UC and CSU rose to a peak of 43,359 in 1975, declined to 34,804 in 1981, and has since increased modestly (see Chart 1). Similar "time series" data are not available for the number of transfers to in-state private or out-of-state institutions.

Changes in the number of community college transfers to UC and CSU are the result primarily of changes in five factors:

- o full-time community college enrollment
About two-thirds of those enrolled full-time in the community colleges indicate they intend to transfer. Thus, while it is not a precise measure, changes in number of full-time students do correspond closely to changes in the number who transfer, say, two years later. Full-time enrollment, in turn, is closely related to the number of high school graduates.
- o transfer admissions requirements
Priority admissions for transfers at certain CSU campuses in the late 1960's and experimentally-lower transfer requirements at UC between 1973 and 1976 both had a substantial impact on the numbers of community college students transferring to those institutions.
- o the military draft
This policy independently contributed to a greater level of transfer activity than was the case after its termination in 1972.
- o student preferences
While the data are incomplete, it appears that more community college students are pursuing occupational, as opposed to transfer or general, education than was the case one or two decades ago. It isn't possible to assess how this trend has affected the numbers of community college transfers, however, since the data are incomplete.

CHART 1

COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRANSFERS TO
THE UNIVERSITY AND STATE UNIVERSITY



The fact that community college transfers to CSU are now nine times the number going to UC (whereas the ratio ten years ago was five to one) reflects the greater shift by CSU toward business and other career-related programs that have become more popular with students in recent years. CSU also became less expensive, relative to UC, over that same period.

A greater proportion of high school graduates (15.4%) are entering UC and CSU directly from high school today than was the case ten years ago (12.7%).

o financial aid

While the data aren't conclusive, the increased financial aid for students in the late 1970's made UC and CSU both less expensive (relative to community colleges) and likely contributed some to the decrease in transfer activity since more students went directly from high school to those institutions. Likewise, inflation and decreased availability of financial aid at the beginning of the 1980's may have contributed to the recent upswing in numbers of transfers.

Program impaction may be having some effect on the number of transfers. In 1983, eligible transfer students were redirected from two or three CSU campuses, from UC Berkeley (one-fourth of all 1983 transfer applicants were redirected), and from three other UC campuses in engineering.

Can a reliable "rate" of transfer be measured and, if so, how and why has it changed over time?

It is not possible at present to determine a transfer "rate" because the pool of potential transfer students has not been accurately identified. Assessing a student's stated intent and course pattern isn't even conclusive. Using these two criteria, one recent study showed that one-third of a sample of students who had transferred would have been categorized as having had occupational objectives while enrolled at community college.

It is apparent, however, that younger students enrolled full-time at community college are three times more likely to intend to transfer than are older students enrolled part-time.

Obviously, comparing the number who transfer with total community college enrollment (a "rate" of four percent) is not valid. The best proxy of a potential "transfer pool" for which data are available appears to be first-time, full-time, less than 25-year-old enrollment. Using this measure,

- o nearly half of the potential pool transfers to UC or CSU two years after entering lower division at a community college.

Including other four-year institutions,

- o community colleges transfer about three of every five potential transfer students within two years of initial enrollment.

Resorting to full-time enrollment as a proxy for the potential pool of transfer students, we find that over the past two decades the community college transfer "rate" (those who transferred divided by the pool) to UC and CSU:

- o did not correlate with the number of transfers; that is, the rate was not necessarily higher when there were higher numbers of transfer students (this is consistent with the findings about those factors that affect the number of transfers)...the "rate" peaked in 1969 while the peak number was not recorded until six years later, in 1975
- o has changed largely because of the effects of
 - o the military draft
 - o transfer admissions policies

Using younger, full-time enrollment as another, more accurate, proxy for the potential transfer pool, we find that transfer "rates" to CSU and UC have been essentially unchanged:

- o CSU for the past decade
- o UC since 1977, the end of the experimental transfer admissions program

Are there substantial differences in transfer activity among individual community colleges?

As expected, the differences in numbers of students transferring from individual colleges to UC and CSU is due primarily to differences in the size of the potential transfer pools in those colleges. Higher transfer numbers are observed also in those colleges where larger proportions of instructional activity takes place in baccalaureate-eligible courses.

Community colleges near UC campuses tend to send more transfer students to UC. College location does not appear to be a factor in the number that transfer to CSU.

Between 1977 and 1981, annual fall transfers to UC and CSU declined from 40,393 to 34,804 (a drop of 14%), but 28 of 100 colleges reported an increase in their transfers to at least one of the four-year segments.

During this period, those colleges experiencing the largest decline in full-time enrollment exhibited the largest decline in transfers to UC and CSU. Large decreases in UC transfers were reported also by colleges with low emphasis on baccalaureate work. Community colleges near CSU campuses experienced the largest drop in CSU transfers.

Special efforts undertaken by individual colleges, during this time, to identify and work with potential transfer students appear to have had little or no impact in stemming the decrease in numbers of transfers.

The period 1981 to 1983 was a time of modest increase in fall transfers from 34,804 to 35,579 (up 2%) when, however, 60 of 100 colleges experienced declining numbers of transfers.

Special efforts by 31 community colleges appear to have had a major impact on increasing the number of UC transfers from those colleges during this period. Also contributing to large increases in UC transfers were the community colleges' increase in full-time enrollment, emphasis on baccalaureate work, and location (near UC campuses and far from CSU campuses). Full-time enrollment increases were the most significant cause of increases in CSU transfers from individual colleges.

Special efforts by individual colleges during this period contributed significantly to increasing the numbers of minority students who transferred to UC and CSU.

Using first-time, full-time, less than 25-year-old students as a proxy for the potential transfer pool in each college, we find that transfer "rates" from individual community colleges to UC vary substantially more than those to CSU.

Transfer rates to UC are highest from those community colleges where:

- o the proportion of instructional activity in baccalaureate-eligible classes is highest
- o University campuses are located nearby.

The proportion of baccalaureate-eligible activity in a college's instructional program reflects, in large part, the character of the college's community and students. The influence of a nearby UC campus underscores its attraction when readily accessible.

Transfer rates to CSU are highest from those community colleges where:

- o the proportion of minority students is lowest
- o the potential transfer pool is smallest; i.e. programs are small.

Have special efforts in individual colleges produced results?

As noted above, special efforts by individual colleges during the late 1970's seem to have had little impact.

By contrast, special work by nearly one-third of the community colleges since 1980 to improve transfer programs appears to have had a significant impact on increasing the numbers of students transferring to UC and CSU, particularly the numbers of minority students.

What are the numbers, characteristics, and motives of "reverse" transfers; i.e., those students who transfer from four-year institutions to community colleges?

One of every five community college students has previously attended a four-year institution.

Each year, more students "reverse" transfer from UC to community colleges than transfer from community college to UC. While transfers from UC are decreasing, transfers from CSU are increasing:

	Fall 1979	Fall 1983
transfer from community college to UC	5,562	5,305
UC to community colleges	10,159	9,717
transfer from community college to CSU	30,428	30,274
CSU to community colleges	27,314	28,671

Less than one-third of the "reverse" transfers (from UC and CSU to community colleges) plan to transfer back to a four-year institution. The remainder, most of whom have bachelor's degrees, are pursuing vocational or special interests in their community college work.

ETHNICITY OF TRANSFER STUDENTS

What is the extent of underrepresentation of racial and ethnic minorities among transfer students? Is that changing? If so, how and why?

Among institutions of postsecondary education in California, community colleges enroll the largest proportion of minority students. Minorities constitute:

31%	of California high school graduates
32	UC first-time freshmen
32	CSU first-time freshmen
35	community college first-time freshmen

Current data on student objectives show that, except for younger Hispanics, minority students who are enrolled full-time in community colleges intend to transfer as often as do non-Hispanic Whites. And more of the minority students attending community college part-time intend to transfer than is the case for Whites.

Despite similar interests in transfer, minorities represent a smaller proportion of those who transfer to UC and CSU than they (minorities) represent of community college enrollment:

	1981 community college enrollment total	1981 community college enrollment full-time	1983 transfers to UC and CSU
Minority	33.4%	39.3%	27.9%
Non-Hispanic White	66.6	60.7	72.1

Among the minority students who transfer, Asians are overrepresented (in relation to their proportion of community college enrollment) and American Indians, Blacks, and Hispanics are underrepresented.

Between 1982 and 1983, minority transfers to UC and CSU increased by 772 (8.4%), while non-Hispanic White transfers decreased by 154. This appears due both to changes in the characteristics of community college students and to special efforts on the part of the individual colleges.

PERFORMANCE OF TRANSFER STUDENTS

How do community college transfer students perform in upper division?

For this discussion, performance is described in terms of grades and rates of persistence.

While fragmented, studies show that 70% to 80% of community college transfers complete one year of work at UC and CSU. Three of five transfer students graduate within three years after beginning upper division work at UC and within five years at CSU.

A mid-1970's study showed that one-third of those community college transfers who withdrew from UC upper division prior to graduation did so because of academic difficulties.

Compared to their counterparts at CSU, transfers to UC bring higher community college grades, but experience a larger drop and compile about the same grade point average (GPA) in their first year. The performance of community college transfers to UC and CSU has been relatively consistent during the past decade, the period for which evidence is available.

How do the grades and persistence rates of community college transfer students compare with those who enrolled at UC and CSU as freshmen ("native" students)?

The performance of those community college transfers who were originally UC-eligible is not substantially different than that of UC native students. Compared with native students, the originally-eligible transfer students compile a similar GPA and appear to graduate at the same rate as do the native students. Fewer of those community college transfer students who were not originally UC-eligible persist to graduation. Those that do, however, perform

at nearly the same level (about a 3.0 GPA) as do natives and transfers who were originally eligible.

Community college transfers to CSU in 1982 compiled essentially the same GPA as did CSU native students. A study of CSU graduation rates in the late 1970's showed that three-fifths of community college transfer students had graduated within five years after transfer, a rate just slightly below that of CSU natives (68% of whom graduated after five years of upper division work).

Are there differences in the performance of those transfer students who were eligible to attend UC or CSU as freshmen as opposed to those who were not eligible coming out of high school?

Data for community college transfers to UC show that those not originally eligible from high school bring slightly lower community college GPA's when transferring than do those who were originally UC-eligible. The first-year drop in GPA (between -0.4 and -0.5 GPA) is comparable for both groups, however. While the evidence is not conclusive, one study showed that both groups of students then raised their second-year GPA's to a level equal to that which they earned at community college; a level that was not substantially different than that of UC natives. The originally-eligible group did, however, graduate in apparently greater numbers than those transfer students who were not originally UC-eligible.

No similar data are available for community college transfers to CSU that would enable a comparison of those who were and were not originally CSU-eligible.

How do the grades and persistence rates of those transferring from community colleges to UC and CSU compare with those who transfer from other institutions?

Community college regularly-admitted transfers to UC:

- o experience a greater GPA differential
 - o compile slightly lower GPA's
- than do those who transfer to UC from four year colleges.

At CSU, community college transfers compile first-year GPA's that are essentially the same as those of students who transfer to CSU from other institutions. Data that compare the upper division persistence rates of CSU transfers from different institutions apparently are not available.

Do those transfer students enrolled under a special criteria perform as well as those who meet the regular criteria for transfer?

Data for CSU show that community college transfers admitted under special criteria drop out of upper division work at a substantially greater rate than do those transfers admitted under regular criteria. Those special admits who do persist compile significantly lower GPA's than their counterparts who were admitted under regular criteria.

Data are available to compare transfers admitted at UC under special (as opposed to regular) criteria, but were not obtained in time for inclusion in this report.

WHAT WE DON'T KNOW

It is clear from these findings that there are large gaps in our knowledge about transfer education. Some of these gaps are particularly important for policymaking and warrant further investigation.

- o More study is needed to identify the causes of recent gains in the number of community college transfers, particularly among minority students. Case studies of individual community colleges whose special efforts appeared to have had an impact would be helpful.
- o More study should be made of the differences between the performance of transfer students admitted under special criteria as opposed to those admitted under regular criteria. The limited evidence now available suggests there are substantial differences.
- o There needs to be better information about the effect on potential transfer students of program impaction at UC and CSU. Existing information is largely anecdotal, but does suggest that program impaction could be a major deterrent to successful transfer.
- o There needs to be study of the impact of financial aid on transfer. This work would focus not only on the amount of aid available, but also on when it is awarded, what students (freshmen or transfer, etc.) receive priority, and what difficulties are encountered in the transition.
- o There obviously needs to be better identification of the motives and capabilities of community college students. Who wants to and may be capable of transferring? This kind of work would have taken place in the matriculation project and, in spite of the Governor's veto of needed funding, students must be assessed and assisted if the transfer function is to be improved.
- o Little is known about the view of those who have transferred regarding the sufficiency of their community college lower division experience. Do these students feel they were adequately prepared for transfer?
- o More accurate information on the number of community college transfers attending private four-year institutions in California would be useful. Also, nothing is known about those who transfer to out-of-state institutions.
- o More complete information on the performance of transfer students at UC and CSU would be helpful. Little is known about their work after the first year in upper division.

- o Virtually nothing is known about the performance of community college transfer students who attend in-state private and out-of-state institutions. While difficult to obtain, this information would be a useful adjunct to that available from UC and CSU.
- o Efforts should be made to bring the two definitions of what constitutes a transfer student at UC and CSU together. UC looks at the college where the majority of prior work has been accomplished, while CSU looks at the college of last attendance.

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